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ABSTRACT

Textbooks have come under a barrage of criticism ranging from overall textbook quality to changing costs. Litigation in the federal courts has challenged textbook content. New York State school boards need to examine the issues in the textbook problem. This paper explains New York State's textbook selection process, which is based on local control; compares it with other states; and shows why New York State should retain local choice. Factors that influence publishers are explored, as are reasons for including values and character education in textbooks. It is maintained that local boards should decide how to incorporate character education into their curricula. The importance of developing selection policies is emphasized, and suggestions for designing such policies are offered. Finally, the paper addresses the role of parents in the process, offering advice on how to involve them. The appendixes include a checklist of criteria, a sample textbook selection and adoption policy, and a simple policy for dealing with public complaints about curricula or instructional material. (31 references) (SI)

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Textbook Selection

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A Matter of Local Choice

EA 021 652

A Position Paper of the
NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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Textbook Selection

A Matter of Local Choice

A Position Paper of the
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Summary of Recommendations

1. Textbook selection in New York State should remain in the capable hands of local school boards. A state selection process cannot address the diversity of student needs; the local process can.
2. There should not be a national committee formed to set textbook and curriculum guidelines; educational standard setting and policy-making should remain with the states and local school boards.
3. Local school boards should make the ultimate decision regarding the kinds of values they want to convey to children who attend public schools.
4. Once a local board has decided how to address values in the curricula, it should ensure its policy decision is reflected in criteria used to select and evaluate textbooks.
5. School boards should demand publishers provide a choice of products that accurately reflect and teach about the diversity of our country, including values and heritage.
6. School boards should have textbook selection policies. Their content should be determined by individual boards.
7. Boards should consider including teachers and other professional staff members on textbook selection committees. Because teachers coordinate the use of textbooks with the prescribed curricula, they must be comfortable and satisfied with the chosen textbooks.
8. Teachers should learn how to evaluate and use textbooks and other instructional materials effectively, either through preservice or inservice training.
9. While school boards should not directly involve parents in the selection process, boards should have a written policy and administrative procedure whereby parents may file written complaints about particular textbooks.
10. School boards should ensure through clear policy, procedure, and good communications that parents understand they have a right to provide input on the instructional materials their own children use, but not for the whole district.
11. School boards should recognize that textbooks are not and should not be the only instructional materials available.

Introduction

Of all the learning tools available to teachers and students alike, textbooks continue to be the number one choice. Most classrooms, especially in the elementary grades, are textbook dominated. It has been estimated that 75 to 95 percent of students' instructional time is spent using textbooks (see Goldstein, 1978; Woodbury, 1979). In many instances, textbooks serve as the curriculum! As Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has pointed out, in the absence of a national curriculum, the process of choosing textbooks "is the closest thing that we have to a systematic debate over what our schools should be teaching" (see *New York Times*, August 12, 1987).

Lately, textbooks have come under a barrage of criticism. Some critics claim the materials and their publishers are to blame for poor test scores, for oversimplified content, and for students' ignorance of the contributions of religion to society. Poor textbooks are cited as a main reason for alleged declines in the quality of education. Yet at the same time, textbooks have grown relatively expensive.

From 1975-76 through 1985-86 in New York, as overall expenditures per pupil for public schools increased 144 percent, textbook expenditures climbed 170 percent, from an average of $13 per pupil to more than $35. That is $10 more than would be expected just from inflation.

The changing cost and quality of textbooks is but one aspect of current policy concerns. Litigation in the federal courts has challenged textbook content. Also, a number of new studies have charged publishers with removing all traces of religion from American history books. These developments have focused attention on both the selection process and the balance of content in textbooks. The purpose in what follows is to examine these related issues as they affect school boards in New York State.

This paper explains New York State's textbook selection process, which is based on local control, compares it with other states, and shows why this state should retain local choice. Factors that influence publishers are explored, as are reasons for including values and character education in textbooks. It is maintained that local boards should decide how to incorporate character education into their curricula. The importance of developing selection policies is emphasized, and suggestions for designing such policies are offered. Finally, the paper addresses the role of parents in the process, offering advice on how to involve them.

A Brief History

Textbooks have been a major part of American education since hornbooks* were brought over from England by the early colonists. In 1792, Noah Webster released *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language, Part I*, later known as the "Blue-Black Speller," which by 1880 was into its fourth edition. Not as successful in terms of sales, but more recognizable were the *McGuffey's Readers*, produced from the 1830s to the 1920s. The hornbooks often featured pious or moral maxims. Webster's texts emphasized patriotism and commerce; McGuffey's books also promoted patriotism, as well as thrift and hard work. These texts reflected the general values of their times; that fact, no doubt, accounted, at least in part, for their popularity.

Textbook selection evolved to meet the needs of the changing school systems. In New York, school districts were established after the Revolutionary War. Pupils attending local schools provided their own texts, using what their families either had or preferred to purchase. This made group or graded instruction nearly impossible. By the 1850s, the New York State Legislature passed a law requiring town committees, advised by school staff, to choose textbooks for each course of study and to require schools to provide these textbooks to enrolled children.

Not all states chose this path. Many states instead, designated textbooks for use in local public schools. Today, 22 states—including the South and most of the Far West—choose textbooks through state agencies or committees. To varying degrees, these groups choose an assortment of textbooks they consider to be suitable to the state's curricular requirements. Local school boards, make selections from state-generated lists. Often, school boards have the option of choosing texts not on the state lists, but may not then be reimbursed through state funds.

On the other hand, 28 states—including New York—are "local choice"; therefore, schools are not limited to selecting textbooks from prescribed lists.

*A child's primer consisting of a sheet of parchment or paper protected by a sheet of transparent horn.

How New York Chooses Textbooks

New York Education Law defines a textbook as "any book, or a book substitute, which shall include hardcovered or paperback books, workbooks, or manuals which a pupil is required to use as a text, or a text substitute, in a particular class or program in the school . . ." (Education Law Section 701[2]).

The law grants local school boards authority to designate textbooks to be used in schools under their care. In New York City, community school boards must choose textbooks from a list approved by the chancellor. Boards also are legally required to purchase and/or to loan such textbooks, free of charge, to children residing in their school districts who are enrolled in grades K to 12 in either *public* or *nonpublic* schools which comply with state education law. School superintendents, in turn, have the authority to recommend to their boards suitable lists of textbooks to be used. Once such textbooks have been adopted, districts cannot replace them any sooner than five years, unless by a three-fourths vote of the school board.

School boards also are required to furnish textbooks free of charge to nonpublic schools which submit requests. Boards may regulate the date by which requests for textbook purchase or loan must reach the district; however, normally the deadline may be no sooner than June 1 of the year prior to the year for which the material is requested. Though nonpublic schools are not legally restricted from choosing new titles within a five year time frame, the State Education Department recommends they adhere to this guideline.

Education law does not give the State Education Department authority to adopt textbooks. However, the Department has a booklet entitled *Selection Guidelines: School Library Resources, Textbooks, Instructional Material*, to assist local school boards to develop their textbook selection policies and guidelines. These are recommendations only—*not* state regulations.

However, certain direct and indirect standards must be observed by school boards. The State Education Department prescribes basic instructional program requirements for elementary and secondary schools and also approves the general course of study that must be offered as a prerequisite for secondary school registration. For each subject taught, moreover, the Department develops a syllabus that is strongly recommended for school districts and mandated for schools identified as low performers through the state's Comprehensive Assessment Reports (CAR). The syllabus describes the philosophy, fundamental concepts and goals of the subject taught, and includes suggested teaching strategies. Neither the syllabus nor course outlines or supplementary handbooks contains a list of required or recommended

textbooks. In some instances, however, syllabi may contain suggested library materials and other resources.

New York State's mandatory student testing is extensive and frequent. Schools are required to administer pupil evaluation program (PEP) tests to elementary students in grades 3, 5 and 6. High school students are required to take the Regents competency tests or Regents comprehensive examinations in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, and American history and government.

All of these factors influence local school boards' textbook choices. While New York remains a local choice state, the textbooks serve as a tool schools use to meet instructional program and testing mandates.

Why New York Remains A Local Choice State

Given the number of mandates the state imposes on public schools, especially with regard to curriculum, should the Board of Regents mandate a list of textbooks from which local districts must choose?

The Regents, while emphasizing the kinds of knowledge and skills children should learn, prefer that local boards decide which textbooks best meet the state objectives in their areas. This is a wise preference for a number of reasons.

One of the arguments for local choice lies in the diversity of New York State. Its school districts reflect this in size, enrollment, wealth, demographic makeup, and ethnic distribution of students. A state selection process cannot address this diversity; the local process can. Local boards of education know what textbooks will be effective learning tools for their districts.

Adopting textbooks statewide will not guarantee uniformity and quality of curricula. A textbook is not a course of study; different teachers may use it differently, and with differing results. Though the state takes responsibility for developing and recommending curricula and related goals, it is up to local school boards to meet these goals based on the needs of their student populations, strengths of their teaching staffs, and community standards and aspirations. The text merely should be a tool selected to meet curricular goals.

Typically more than 50 percent of a school district's budget is derived from local tax dollars. Continued monetary support requires that local taxpayers have a sense there is local control of the decision-making process. Taxpayers must be assured that they have an impact on the education of their children. Textbook selection is an important symbol of local self-determination.

Who Sets the Standards?

It takes a lot of time and money to create a textbook series, and because publishers are in business to make a profit, they want to be guaranteed a winner. Accordingly, many publishers have chosen to direct sales efforts to those markets which yield the largest sales—states such as California and Texas; each has state-level textbook selection committees. Publishers pay close attention to these committee requirements; one result has been pressure on publishers

to change content. The composition and sensitivities of committees, as well as the viewpoints of special interest groups, have influenced the newer generation of textbooks.

In the past 20 years, for example, publishers have been pressured to remove references to people in traditional roles, such as girls playing with dolls or learning to cook, and boys playing baseball or mowing the lawn. Publishers also have felt pressure to portray women in such nontraditional roles as doctors and truck drivers, while removing men from office settings, and deleting depictions of minorities in subservient roles.

Certain sectors of the public have objected to stories about evil witches and magic spells, as well as to selections that contain violence, obscene words, sexual overtones, and death. Even the depiction of foods has been affected. Certain publishers have been pressured to drop references to junk food, for example, and food containing sugar.

Not all changes have been proposed solely by states with a centralized selection process. Approximately half the states choose textbooks on the local level; because publishers serve these markets as well, school districts in local choice states also influence publishers' products.

New York, for example, pioneered the degrees of reading power (DRP) test, which measures how well students understand the meaning of what they read. This, in turn, can be used to analyze the readability of instructional materials; publishers do this analysis and adapt textbooks accordingly.

Also, publishers work the New York course of study and syllabi into many of their products. Because Regents examinations are aligned with state syllabi, the availability of texts matched with those syllabi is not only a promotional asset for publishers, but also an advantage for teachers who want to be sure they cover what the state views as required material.

A National Committee?

If the textbooks available to local school boards are developed mainly for the "super states," should we take the next logical step of forming a national committee to set textbook and curriculum guidelines? No. Educational standard setting and policy-making should remain with the states and local school boards. This country is too diverse to standardize curriculum and textbook content.

The textbook market in the United States is enormous, and should be able to accommodate diversity. State and local education authorities know best how to serve the needs of unique school communities. If they are not satisfied with publishers' products, they should let publishers know by stating requirements clearly and by using purchasing power as leverage.

Value and Character Education in Textbooks

One of the biggest tests for textbook publishers is how to deal with values and character education. Responding to pressure groups, some publishers have removed controversial material in order to sell their products.

Whether textbooks can or should be used to address sometimes controversial beliefs that shape human relations within a culture should be determined at the grass-roots level by local school boards who understand community preferences. Once a local board has decided how to address values, it should ensure its policy decision is reflected in criteria used to select and evaluate textbooks.

Communities and parents generally support character development and teaching civic values, along with academics, in schools. Textbook writers, therefore, should make this combination of values and facts a goal of text content. Two questions must be raised: Who should decide what values to incorporate in the text, and what values should be included?

The first question has been answered already. Local school boards should make the ultimate decision regarding the kinds of values they want to convey to children who attend public schools; publishers can respond accordingly.

To answer the second question, it is important to clarify what is *not* being suggested: teaching religion in public schools. Religious values instruction should remain with parents, houses of worship, and non-public schools.

Instead, boards of education should make sure textbooks include adequate discussion of civic and moral values that are part of American culture; values that cut across diverse religious and ethnic lines, such as hard work, thrift, tolerance, honesty, respect for human rights, and good citizenship.

These values have their roots in early American education. The *McGuffey's Readers* stressed both morals and civic values which helped to assimilate the waves of immigrants who came to America and unite the country during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The tradition of teaching values has not been lost. In New York, local boards who look to the State Education Department for guidance will find various state curricula guides and syllabi emphasize

values education. For example, the social studies syllabi stress the understanding of civic values, including political, economic, and social institutions and procedures in the United States, as well as in other countries.

Still, publishers only will produce and market what they feel will sell. School boards must demand a choice of products that accurately reflect and teach about the diversity of our country, including our values.

States establish the broad goals of education, but local districts need the freedom to select the material that will allow them to help their students meet the state goals.

—Farr & Tulley, 1985

Selecting Textbooks

Local school boards bear the ultimate responsibility for providing public education in their districts; part of this responsibility is to provide appropriate textbooks. Boards' roles may vary: some actually participate in the process, while others adopt a selection policy and delegate responsibility to staff. It is common for a selection committee to examine available textbooks and make recommendations to the superintendent who, in turn, recommends to the board. The board approves—or disapproves—the selection, and provides the funds for purchase.

A doctoral study at Indiana University indicates some elements which shape the decision-making process of local selection committees:

- *Pedagogy*—educational trends and local attitudes, teacher attitudes, committee members' experiences.
- *Publishers*—quality, personalities, and order of presentation of the publishers.
- *Pilot try-outs*—reputations of teachers and publishers involved, as well as the length and extent of studies.
- *Intra- and inter-district politics*—interrelationships of the selection committee members; textbooks selected at other schools.
- *Processes*—criteria used to examine textbooks, procedures for textbook publishers to make presentations, amount of time allowed committee members to make recommendations.

The Indiana University study suggests that complex factors influence textbook selection. School boards should become aware of—and be sensitive to—these complexities as they review recommendations made by selection committees and the superintendent. **Appendix A**, a sample checklist of criteria for use by selection committees to ana-

lyze the textbooks, is provided to help board members ask administrators relevant questions that will lead to decisions based on solid educational criteria. School boards should have textbook selection policies; though the specific content should be left to individual boards, they may want to include certain features:

- a statement asserting the board's legal right to make the final decision in selecting textbooks;
- a statement of philosophy or goals upon which the policy is based, and how it relates to the curricula;
- a definition of the materials to be covered;
- a list of who should be on the selection committee;
- a list of factors which the committee should consider when making their selection;
- a statement describing the procedure for handling challenged materials.

Appendix B contains a sample textbook selection and adoption policy and regulation for boards to consider.

School boards also should be aware that publishers sell much more than textbooks; they also sell whole programs—texts, teachers' editions, workbooks, computer software, film strips, posters, tests and worksheets ready for duplicating, and more. A decision to purchase a particular textbook series may hinge on these extra materials. Extras may be tempting or appear to generate a savings, but the textbook itself is still the most important object of purchase. The best supplemental materials will *not* compensate for a poorly written and constructed textbook.

The point of local choice is to give boards the latitude to develop selection processes suited to their districts. The actual process will differ from district to district. In *Changing the American Schoolbook* (1978), Paul Goldstein reports on the practices of three New York school districts. His case studies involve interviews with administrators, teachers, and publishers' sales representatives who had contact with these districts. The study shows some of the variations in selection practices.

In one district, subject area supervisors and curricula evaluation committees identify subjects that need new materials. A textbook selection committee for each area is formed, based upon the district's manual of textbook selection, composed of principals, teachers, and subject area supervisors. The committee solicits materials from textbook publishers, evaluates materials, invites publishers to make presentations. The committee recommends to the district's division of curricula evaluation, which in turn, presents findings to the school board.

While students are the ultimate consumers of textbooks, *teachers* must coordinate textbook use with prescribed curriculum and, therefore, should be comfortable and satisfied with the chosen textbooks.

In a second district, the curricula development supervisor notifies principals and teachers that a selection committee will be formed, seeks possible members, and forms the committee. It is provided with a guideline of the main issues and areas for consideration, as well as inservice training on textbook selection. The committee forms an evaluation form for possible textbooks. While the committee receives inservice training, the supervisor solicits sample textbooks for examination. The committee evaluates the samples, results are tabulated, the list narrowed to seven or eight selections, publishers of those textbooks are invited to make presentations. The committee makes its recommendations to the board.

In a third district, while teachers are not eligible to be on the textbook selection committee, they are encouraged to attend meetings and participate in the deliberations. The committee, composed of subject area chairman from each school, relies on state criteria rather than its own. Textbooks seriously considered are subject to pilot testing in the schools.

What is similar to the three districts? In some way they involve teachers and administrators in the selection process. While students are the ultimate consumers of textbooks, *teachers* must coordinate textbook use with prescribed curriculum and, therefore, should be comfortable and satisfied with the chosen textbooks. Teachers should be prepared, either through preservice or inservice training, to evaluate and use textbooks effectively. Then, those teachers who serve on selection committees will do so with a better understanding of and ability to contribute to the process. Even those who never serve on such committees will be prepared better to evaluate and utilize the available materials, and to let committee members know their likes and dislikes, and, even more importantly, what is effective as a learning tool.

Parental Involvement

Should school boards involve parents in the selection process? Indiana, Maryland, California and Texas are among an increasing number of states that require parents to be included on state selection committees (Woodbury, 1979). In California, Texas, and Alabama, the general public is invited to examine prospective textbooks made available for examination and comment.

But how does a school board keep certain parents with specific agendas from imposing their narrow views on the textbook selection process? In some cases, vocal advocacy groups can divert attention from instructional quality, district goals, and the range of alternatives available. The Alabama and Tennessee textbook cases illustrate this by use of religious objections. In the Alabama case, parents have to have certain texts banned. In Tennessee, they attempted to have their children opt out of classes where "objectionable" textbooks are

discussed. By using the courts to impose their views concerning textbooks and subject matter taught, parents may challenge directly the philosophy and goals of public education. That philosophy favors exposing students to diverse viewpoints and encouraging them to respect those views while assessing them critically.

To accommodate parental concerns, public schools have many educationally effective techniques for dealing with controversial issues. Districts usually rely on the ability of teachers to help students learn how to analyze and understand controversy and diverse values and viewpoints. Success grows from teachers' ability to create an appropriate mix of learning materials to enable students with diverse backgrounds, talents and belief systems to reach the same educational destination.

Public school systems try to respond to individual sensitivities, but they have limits. These may be reached when too many parents demand too many variations, or insist on permission for students to opt out completely from common learnings. Parental requests for their children to be excused from a particular part of the curricula not only create major logistical problems for schools, but endanger the students' own chances to meet education requirements and to acquire the skills needed to be productive and knowledgeable citizens.

Some parents may not see that what they want for their own children is not necessarily good for *all* children. While they may have the best intentions, these may not coincide with curricula or textbook selection policies set by their school board. Parents may tend to look for textbooks similar to those they remember using as children, or expect textbooks to reflect their own viewpoints. They may not remember or be aware that public education—to promote critical thinking—often must incorporate thought-provoking ideas.

Rather than directly involving parents in the selection process, school boards should have a policy whereby parents may file written complaints about particular textbooks. A materials review committee, consisting of staff members designated by the board, would be responsible for reviewing the complaints, and recommending a disposition to the board. **Appendix C** contains a sample policy and regulation for public complaints about curricula or instructional material and a sample form for requesting reevaluation of instructional materials.

School boards should ensure through clear policy, procedure, and good communication that parents understand they have a right to provide comment on instructional materials their children use but they do *not* have the right to censor materials for the whole district.

Conclusion

In New York State, textbook selection should remain in the capable hands of local school boards. Textbook selection is an integral part of their responsibility to provide the best education possible to the children they serve. How boards carry this out has a wide-ranging impact not only on the quality of education provided to the children, but on how boards are perceived by their staffs, teachers, and parents. Boards should recognize their functions are to shape relevant policy, to provide parameters for the selection process, and to rely on the expertise of their staffs to recommend the best textbooks. Where the evidence shows that staff lacks knowledge or preparation, boards must step in and create the opportunity for guidance through inservice education.

Boards also should recognize the potential power of parents. Not every parent will approve of every textbook. Boards must be ready to meet these complaints with a materials review policy. But boards should *not* allow a few vocal parents to dictate what should be provided through textbooks. Public education is just that—*public* education; it is designed for *all* children and takes into consideration a multitude of viewpoints.

Boards further should understand that textbooks are a product, a means to a profit in the broadest possible market. Should educational quality be sacrificed for economic gain and social harmony? Certainly publishers have been attacked for de-emphasizing content and avoiding controversial issues. If boards demand and buy quality products that fairly and forthrightly address controversial issues, are rich in content, and have the potential to challenge and interest students, then publishers will comply in providing such textbooks, and the quality of public schooling will improve.

Finally, boards should recognize that textbooks are not—and should not—be the only instructional materials available. Textbooks are but one tool for learning; others include library books, newspapers, magazines, computer software, and videotapes.

It is up to local boards to make their preferences known in selecting textbooks and other basic instructional resources. In this matter of local choice, school boards have a powerful and direct opportunity to improve the quality and content of learning in public schools.

APPENDIX A*

Checklist of Criteria

Touchstones for Textbook Selection Inventory*

	excellent 5	adequate 3	inadequate 1
1. Appropriate readability level	_____	_____	_____
2. Author(s) reputable in field	_____	_____	_____
3. Indicates successful field-testing of text and assessment instruments	_____	_____	_____
4. Published by reputable firm	_____	_____	_____
5. Table of contents exhibits logical development of subject	_____	_____	_____
6. Meets course objectives	_____	_____	_____
7. Language appropriate for intended students	_____	_____	_____
8. Presents major concepts thoroughly and accurately	_____	_____	_____
9. Defines difficult/important ideas and vocabulary in context or in a glossary	_____	_____	_____
10. Contains visual illustrations of key concepts	_____	_____	_____
11. Levels of abstraction appropriate for readers	_____	_____	_____
12. Provides chapter objectives	_____	_____	_____
13. Provides chapter summaries	_____	_____	_____
14. Format interesting and material well presented	_____	_____	_____
15. Avoids stereotypes and sexist language	_____	_____	_____
16. Provides for concrete application of abstract concepts	_____	_____	_____
17. Recommends resources and research projects	_____	_____	_____
18. Suggests alternative resources for students experiencing difficulty	_____	_____	_____
19. Provides teacher's guide or manual	_____	_____	_____
20. Provides for assessment of instructional objectives	_____	_____	_____
Subtotals	_____	_____	_____
Total Score		_____	

Text _____

Author _____ Reviewer _____

Publisher _____

Publication date _____

Date of review _____

*Some inventory users will wish to assign extra weight to certain "touchstones."

*Eloise O. Warming and Elizabeth Coe Baber, "Touchstones for Textbook Selection," *Phi Delta Kappan*, June 1980, p. 695. This chart has been reprinted with the permission of *Phi Delta Kappan*.
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*Appendix B**

Sample Policy 4511

Textbook Selection and Adoption

The board of education shall provide a wide range of textbooks and instructional materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal, and the presentation of different points of view.

The superintendent of schools shall recommend textbooks and instructional materials to the board for adoption which meet the following criteria:

1. Materials shall support and be consistent with the general educational goals of the district and the objectives of specific courses.
2. Materials shall meet high standards of quality in factual content and presentation.
3. Materials shall be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, ability level, and social development of the students for whom the materials are selected.
4. Materials shall have aesthetic, literary, or social value.
5. Materials chosen shall be by competent and qualified authors and producers.
6. Materials shall be chosen to foster respect for minority groups, women, and ethnic groups and shall realistically represent our pluralistic society, along with the roles and lifestyles open to both men and women in today's world. Materials shall be designed to help students gain an awareness and understanding of the many important contributions made to civilization by minority groups, ethnic groups and women.
7. Materials shall be selected for their strengths rather than rejected for their weaknesses.
8. Biased or slanted materials may be provided, but only to meet specific curriculum objectives.
9. Physical format and appearance of materials shall be suitable for their intended use.
10. The selection of materials on controversial issues will be directed toward maintaining a balanced collection representing various views.

Ref: Education Law, Section 701 et seq, 1711, 2508, 2566.

*Adapted from *Selection of Instructional Materials* Iowa Department of Public Instruction, 1977; see Code of Iowa 279.8, Ch. 301. For further information and sample policies, contact the New York State School Boards Association, Department of Policy Services.

Sample Regulation 4511-R

Textbook Selection and Adoption Regulation

In preparing recommendations to the board of education, the superintendent shall use the following procedure to solicit opinion and advice from professional staff.

A. **Textbooks and Text Material**
   1. Text materials committees shall be appointed by the superintendent, when appropriate. Appropriate subject area, instructional level, and media personnel shall be included in each committee.
   2. Criteria for text materials consistent with board policy shall be developed by teacher committees.
   3. The committee shall present its recommendation(s) to the superintendent.
   4. The superintendent shall present recommendation(s) to the board.

B. **Audio-visual and Other Media**
   1. In recommending materials for purchase for the media center, the media specialist will evaluate the existing collection and the curricula needs and will consult reputable, professionally-prepared selection aids and other appropriate sources. The term "media" includes materials considered part of the library collection, plus instructional materials housed in resource centers and classrooms (if any) which are not text.
   2. Recommendations for purchase may be solicited from faculty and student body.
   3. Gift materials shall be judged by the criteria in board policy and shall be accepted or rejected by those criteria.
   4. Recommendations are forwarded to the office of the superintendent for presentation to the board.

*Appendix C**

Sample Policy 1420

Public Complaints About Curricula or Instructional Material

The board of education recognizes students' rights of free access to many different types of books and instructional materials and the right of teachers and administrators to recommend books and other materials for selection by the board in accordance with current trends in education, and to make them available in the schools.

The board's aim is to provide materials that present all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times, international, national and local. Books and other reading matter shall be chosen for values of interest and enlightenment of all students. A book shall not be excluded because of the race, nationality, political or religious views of its author. Books and other reading matter of sound factual authority shall not be precluded from—nor removed from—the library or classrooms because of partisan, doctrinal approval or disapproval.

Procedures for Handling Challenged Materials

Complaints concerning textbooks, library books, and other instructional material shall be submitted to the superintendent of schools. The superintendent shall promulgate regulations subject to board approval establishing a complaint procedure which shall include:

1. an opportunity for an informal conference with the complainant;
2. the submission of formal written complaints on a prescribed form;
3. the formation of an instructional material review committee. The member of the committee shall be recommended by the superintendent and appointed by the board. The committee shall make recommendations to the superintendent concerning the disposition of any complaint;
4. a decision by the superintendent; and
5. an appeal to the board of education. The decision of the board shall be final.

Procedures for Handling Complaints Concerning Curricula

Complaints concerning the content of any curriculum in the district shall be referred to the superintendent of schools. The superintendent shall promulgate regulations subject to board approval establishing a complaint procedure similar to those established for complaints about instructional material.

**Law and Management Policies for Schools.* Albany, NY: New York State School Boards Association, Inc., 1986. For further information and sample policies, contact the Association's Department of Policy Services.

Public Complaints About Curricula or Instructional Material

Sample Regulation 1420-R

A. Complaint Procedures Concerning Textbooks, Library Material and Other Instructional Material

The following procedures shall be employed in handling complaints concerning any textbook, library book or material and any other instructional material used in the schools of the district.

1. At the discretion of the superintendent an informal meeting may be held between the complainant and the superintendent.
2. If a complaint is not resolved informally the complainant must file a written complaint with the superintendent on a form provided for this purpose.
3. Any written complaint will be presented to the Instructional Material Review Committee. The membership of the committee, which shall be submitted to the board of education for annual approval, shall consist of: an elementary and secondary classroom teacher, an elementary and secondary principal or assistant principal, a library media specialist, the assistant superintendent for instructional services, who shall serve as chairman of the committee, and a member of the community. The committee shall:
   a. read and examine the challenged materials;
   b. consider the specific objections to the material voiced by the complainant;
   c. weigh the values and faults of the material as a whole;
   d. consider oral presentations made to the committee. The committee will determine whether any oral presentations will be beneficial to its deliberations;
   e. the committee will, where appropriate, solicit advice or opinion from other faculty and staff of the district;
   f. the committee shall issue a report to the superintendent containing its recommendations concerning any complaint.
4. The superintendent shall review the report of the committee, make a decision and notify the complainant and appropriate staff.
5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the superintendent's decision he may refer the complaint to the board. The superintendent will deliver a copy of his decision and the committee's report to the board for its consideration.

B. Complaint Procedures Concerning Curricula

The following procedures shall be employed in handling complaints concerning any curriculum in the district.

1. At the discretion of the superintendent, an informal meeting may be held between the complainant and the superintendent.
2. If a complaint is not resolved informally the complainant must file a written complaint with the superintendent. Because the nature of the complaints may vary no standard form is provided.
3. The superintendent shall review the complaint, consult with any district staff, State Education Department personnel or any other organization or individual that he deems appropriate and make a decision regarding the complaint. The superintendent may designate any other administrator in the district to render a decision concerning a complaint.
4. The complainant and appropriate staff shall be informed, by the superintendent, of the decision.
5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent or his designee he may refer the complaint to the board, whose decision shall be final.

Request for Reevaluation of Instructional Materials

Request initiated by _____ Date _____

Telephone _____ Address _____

Complainant represents: Self _____ Group (name) _____

_____

TITLE: _____ AUTHOR: _____

Publisher or Producer: _____

Publisher's recommended grade level: _____

Book _____

AV Material (please Specify format) _____

Other _____

1. Have you read/heard/seen the material in its entirety? _____

   _____

   _____

2. To what do you specifically object? Please cite specific passages, pages, etc. _____

   _____

   _____

3. Is your objection to this material based upon your personal exposure to it, upon reports you have heard, or both? _____

   _____

   _____

4. What do you believe is the theme or purpose of the material? _____

   _____

   _____

5. What do you feel might be the result of reading/viewing this work? _____

   _____

6. In its place, what work of equal value would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of a society or a set of values? _____

   _____

   _____

7. Do you wish to make an oral presentation of 15 minutes or less to the Materials Review Committee? _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

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